

## Urbanization, Tourism and Migrations: Interrelationships and Challenges in Spain

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The increase in the flows of people due to the boom in tourism and leisure-oriented migration from central and northern Europe towards the Mediterranean coasts (Williams et al., 1997, 2000, 2004; King et al., 2000) has coincided in southern Spain since the 1960s with the transition from farming and fishing communities to communities whose economies are based on the construction sector and property-related activities around an intense development of second homes in coastal towns and nearby areas (Warnes, 1991; O'Reilly, 2000, 2003, 2007; Gustafson, 2001, 2009; Salvà, 2002; Rodríguez et al., 2004; Casado, 2006; Huete, 2009). Thus, in the process of modernisation that began fifty years ago in the Spanish Mediterranean region, the urban and tourism planning have been subject to the production of urban land demanded by the international real estate market (Barke, 1991; Monfort and Ivars, 2001; Vera and Ivars, 2003; Pedro, 2006). It is an economic system supported by the activity of the real estate sector, which has made a mere increase of the construction activity appear like tourism development (Mantecón, 2010).

The Spanish socio-economic development has been strongly dependent on the construction industry, which has brought about a whole series of adverse consequences. Consequences that have

become more evident in those regions traditionally promoted as mass tourism destinations, and that has to do with serious and diverse environmental impacts (Vera and Ivars, 2003), as well as complex problems of public management related to the changes to the socio-demographic structure of many towns. These changes are mainly linked to the increase of two flows of residential mobility: on the one hand, the young work force attracted by the labour market, and on the other, the elderly tourists and migrants that spend a few months each year, or settle indefinitely, in the new tourist enclave. The latter flow is the most intense, which together with the ageing process of the local population, has brought about a progressive ageing of the demographic structure (Casado, 1999; La Parra and Mateo, 2008; Huete, 2009).

This situation is the result, to a great extent, of the Spanish economy's having specialised in a model of 'sun and bricks and mortar', which during decades adapted rather well to a context characterised by a low-skilled human capital unable to fit into a high-productivity model. Thus, the low competitiveness of the Spanish system resulted in a chronic position of over-importation and sub-exportation that, in macroeconomic terms, has been concealed for years by the revenue from the tourism industry. It is worth noting that the current international economic crisis is even more serious in Spain, since it has coincided with the burst of the property bubble (house prices rose by 207 per cent between 1995 and 2007). The extensive construction of property to be used as holiday homes, or frequently, just for speculative purposes, overlapped the new intra-European residential mobility flows (O'Reilly, 2003, 2007; Allen et al., 2004).

## **1. Tourism and Migration: The Problem of Terminology**

The collapse of the construction industry in 2008, which has had a strong impact on the country's economy, together with the decline in the tourists' expenditure has led the Spaniards to rekindle the particular 'love-hate relationship' that they have always had with the different social groups they identify as 'international tourists' (Barke, 1999). Such label is often used by the Spanish society to refer to most of the residential mobility types, apart from the usual labour migration flows, that they identify on the Mediterranean regions (Mantecón, 2010). To refer to this variety

of relocations and residential strategies, researchers have used a multitude of terms, depending on the particular groups and behaviours they analyse or the characteristics they consider essential. Without attempting to be exhaustive, we list next some of these expressions and some of the authors that have used them, although this does not necessarily mean that they coined the term: 'amenity migration' (Haas and Serow, 1993; Moss, 2006), 'cyclical migration' (McHugh et al., 1995), 'elderly migration' (Biggar, 1980; Huber and O'Reilly, 2004), 'later-life migration' (Silverstein and Zablotzky, 1996; Walters, 2002), 'leisure migration' (Böröcz, 1996), 'lifestyle migration' (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009; Sato, 2001), 'retirement migration' (King et al., 2000; Rodríguez, 2001; Oliver, 2007), 'residential immigration' (Salvà, 2002), 'seasonal migration' (Gustafson, 2002; Hogan, 1987), 'temporary migration' (Smith and House, 2007), 'tourism-led migration' (Williams and Hall, 2002), 'long-stay tourism' (Ono, 2008), 'residential tourism' (Mazón, 2006; O'Reilly, 2007; McWatters, 2008), 'second-home tourism' (Breuer, 2005; Jaakson, 1986), 'elderly residential mobility' (Speare and Meyer, 1988), 'leisure-oriented mobility' (Hall et al., 2004), 'lifestyle mobilities' (Janoschka, 2009), 'privileged mobility' (Croucher, 2012), or 'tourism-related mobilities' (Janoschka, 2011).

Given this profusion of terms, and having conducted our own research on the subject (Huete and Mantecón, 2012a; Huete et al., 2013; Mantecón, 2010), we propose to use the term 'tourist' to refer exclusively to those individuals that intend to return to their usual place of residence, that is, those who are 'passing through' and enjoying a holiday in a second home (their own, borrowed, shared, or rented), and use the term 'migrant' or 'resident' to talk about those individuals that do not want to return to their home country, or do not know if they will in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, migrants tend to confirm their status by establishing ties that, beyond the emotional bonds, materialise in objective decisions like registering with their local town council, or settling in a property and spending more time in it throughout the year than in any other.

We use in this chapter the term 'leisure-oriented residential mobility' since the characteristic that distinguishes these residential relocations is precisely the individuals' interest in

placing leisure at the centre of their lives, regardless of how long this situation may last, or the emotional or administrative ties that they establish with their new place of residence. When we talk about leisure-oriented residential mobility we are referring specifically to residential mobility types that go from long-stay tourism in second homes to leisure-oriented migration (understood here as a type of migration that seeks to shape a lifestyle based on leisure experiences in environments that enable individuals to spend a great deal of time enjoying outdoor activities). The individuals that embody this type of mobility try to reorient their lives, indefinitely or for stretches of time of variable duration, towards the search for self-realisation and a better quality of life, pushing into the background those activities characteristic of the working world. This does not mean, however, that these individuals do not take economic aspects into consideration when they decide to move, but their wish to improve their material conditions is not the main reason among all the factors taken into account when they made their decision to relocate (which does happen in the case of labour migrants). Their wish to increase their economic resources is not as important as their attempt to appease the feeling of restlessness that appears when individuals, whose material needs have more or less been met, realise that they are not satisfied with their lives.

## **2. Socio-Spatial Fragmentation**

This framework of new mobility forms and residential relocations has been incorporated into the process of production of second homes in environments with potential tourism appeal. The effects produced are ambivalent and susceptible to many clarifications. Thus, we adopt a critical approach that focuses on its controversial aspects. We do not intend to paint a negative image of the whole process but rather to put forward a line of argument that may help us to understand why sometimes, and under certain circumstances, the dynamics generated by this process have negative repercussions. Such impacts are related to the commodification, massification, and fragmentation of spaces, and in sum, the degradation and vulgarisation of ecological and socio-cultural features that first made those areas attractive as residential destinations.

The geographical embodiment of these dynamics in the Spanish Mediterranean region has produced new structures that allow us to speak of what Dallen Timothy (2002) has called 'tourism-created urban ethnic islands'. Timothy uses this expression to characterize the emergence of locations associated with particular ethnic groups in southern Europe and the United States. These urban enclaves are mainly related to leisure-oriented (not only tourism) lifestyles. This is the key point that differentiates them from other types of 'urban ethnic islands' like Chinatowns or Little Italies. Timothy (2002: 139) illustrates this enclave type with the case of the northern European communities along Spain's Mediterranean coast. Therefore, in several areas in Southern Spain towns, the significant presence of foreign nationals shapes a cultural landscape unlike the host society: the increase in the number of pubs, restaurants, food stores, supermarkets, and technical support services conveys the feeling of being in the United Kingdom, which results in an apparent parallel society. Thus, the term 'tourism-created urban ethnic islands' makes reference both to the uneven distribution of social groups on the territory, and the lack of relationship between these groups. In other words, these types of international mobility have produced new socio-spatial forms in the host regions resulting in singular cases of societies, where the neighbourhoods with a high percentage of northern European citizens (British retirees for the most part) are particularly isolated from Spanish society (Huete and Mantecón, 2011). Consequently, the space reflects the functional specialisation of the territory and the socio-cultural differences.

Following Timothy (2002), with the term 'tourism-created urban ethnic islands', we are referring to the proliferation of housing estates (known in Spanish as 'urbanizaciones') separate from the traditional urban centres, although equally dependent on the same political-administrative body: the local council. There are population centres where an unusual number of northern European citizens reside, whose daily activity gives the impression to the occasional visitor of being in a peculiar parallel society. The trend towards the development of distinct parallel societies with their own cultural features is consistent with the results of previous studies on the habits of long-stay tourists and leisure-oriented migrants in the Mediterranean region (King et al., 2000; Huber

and O'Reilly, 2004; Benson and O'Reilly, 2009). It is a tendency of people that share their nationality to come together in a space apart from those areas inhabited mainly by Spanish citizens, and at the same time, the emergence of lifestyles guided by the search for leisure rather than the search for a job.

In these spaces the language of the largest group of immigrants dominates the local linguistic framework. This is essentially due to the new residents' difficulty in learning Spanish, partly because they do not need it in their daily life in Spain. In fact, in these British enclaves, the residents can often access services provided in their own language, or with the help of an interpreter, even health care services (La Parra and Mateo, 2008). Besides, they tend to live in housing estates where most of the residents come from the United Kingdom so their language and national identity are maintained.

### **3. The Limits of Authenticity**

We may think that individuals whose relocation has more to do with non-work related migration than to tourist travels shape their daily life in a different way to individuals whose profile is more similar to that of a conventional second-home tourist. In fact, Per Gustafson (2002) explains how the individuals to which we refer here as leisure-oriented migrants ask not to be mistaken for tourists because they believe to have a deeper knowledge of the local reality, and access to genuine and authentic experiences, which distinguishes from the tourists. This is only partially true. In a study involving 20 in-depth interviews with British and German residents in a town of the Spanish Mediterranean region (Huete and Mantecón, 2012b), all the respondents stated that it is possible to identify easily a minority group of expatriates who are involved in an informal way in the local politics and society. They coexist with a majority group of leisure-oriented migrants imbued with apathy regarding the problems of the context where they live, starting with an almost total ignorance of the local language. The lifestyle of the latter is guided by attitudes and behaviours more similar to those of the tourists who leave their daily concerns temporarily behind than to those of the residents (despite the fact that for years they have been spending most of their time in Spain). In her illustrative study conducted in

another region in southern Spain, Karen O'Reilly (2009) found that most of her fellow citizens simply do not speak Spanish (a conclusion she reached after carrying out a survey among 340 British residents). The research conducted all over the world over the last few years has found very complex cases when it comes to the degree of integration of leisure-oriented migrants in the host societies. A literature review let us suppose that in many places, with their own specific characteristics, the situation is similar to the one we have just described in regard to the British expatriates in southern Spain.

The communities of German, British, Scandinavian, and other expatriates that settle in locations promoted by international real estate agents as the 'Garden of Eden' end up reproducing attitudes and behaviours similar to the ones they showed in their leisure time in their places of origin. However, they now improve the quality of those experiences since they enjoy easier access to outdoor activities: they do not change much their food habits, they read the same newspapers and watch the same TV programmes thanks to the Internet or a satellite dish, they mix with the same type of people, and sometimes, they create associations with recreational or cultural goals where the presence of locals is insignificant or non-existent. Whatever access to authentic experiences means, it is constantly redefined: if the traditional houses have too small windows, then the façade is rebuilt (and incidentally, also the interior); if the nature surrounding the property is too wild, it is landscaped (Huete, 2013); if the locals do not speak my language, then I limit the interaction with them; if individuals suspect that the social environment does not guarantee their safety, then protection walls are built that will restrict the field of action of every group. Thus, the arrival of individuals with different socio-demographic, economic, and cultural profiles transforms local realities. The meaning of the place, idealised by some and lived as a daily reality by others, changes completely for all the residents. But who decides those changes? And what consequences do these changes have?

#### **4. Political Implications**

Residents of the housing estates have different mobility and residential strategy patterns: many of them evolve from a tourist

status into an immigrant-like status. This situation complicates the administrative management and maintenance of the public resources. The presence of European retirees on the Spanish coasts has contrasting consequences. On the one hand, they generate an important economic activity (real estate, trade/consumption, facilities, etc.) that stimulates the offer of personal, health and elder care services; they also contribute to the urbanisation and vitality of relatively neglected areas. On the other hand, under-registration is an obvious problem (since there are not exact figures about the actual number of residents), which has become a challenge for the administration, and particularly, for local and health authorities. The fiscal problem is also an economic one, as many of these immigrants usually keep their productive investments (and tax payments) outside the region and Spain, although no data to quantify this impact are available.

Over the last few years, there has been an increase in the number of towns located in the tourists regions of southern Spain where the main political parties have included European citizens in their organisation. In fact, 25 local councils in the Alicante province have had a councillor working exclusively on matters related to this group of residents. In some towns, the associations of European residents have organised themselves politically. In San Fulgencio, for instance, they managed to win 7 out of 14 council seats (three went to British nationals) in the local elections held in 2007. With these new political associations northern European citizens are trying to leave behind their image among the Spanish of mere consumers, heterogeneous and confused, of a tourist space. They are attempting to achieve a functional reorganisation of the human relationships in an urban space whose morphology does not often meet the needs of its residents. This is determined by the creation of a dual or parallel space, where the urban centre of management is geographically and culturally apart from the social reality in which the interactions take place. This question gives rise to discontent among the residents of the housing estates, because they perceive an excessive dissonance between their needs and the means that the local council puts at their disposal to meet them. Thus, the perception of the problems experienced by the peripheral housing estates, and the decision to set up associations to try to solve them reinforce the sense of belonging to the community.



The political organisation of European residents, aimed at claiming their rights more effectively, may give rise to different reactions within the host society. However, as long as they are regarded as tourists (or residential-long stay tourists) Spanish society will not be aware of this new reality. Spaniards perceive European residents (regardless of whether or not they are retirees) as tourists or foreigners, but not as immigrants, a term applied only to citizens from countries with worse working conditions (Mantecón, 2010). Local, regional and central governments will have to accept the new multinational and multicultural reality that these new migration patterns, either residential or related to the labour market, entail. Moreover, they will have to be capable of implementing integration policies more active than festivals and occasional meetings.

The EU Member States struggle over the ideal of 'European citizenship' and social Europe, on the one hand, and their resistance to lose control of social policies, health systems and social security expenditure, on the other (Ackers and Dwyer, 2004; Schriewer and Rodes, 2006).

## **5. The Health Care Question**

The Spanish Health Act 1986 establishes the free and universal coverage of health care services. In implementing the Act the country's health care system guarantees a wide access to it for the foreign population. The Spanish media point out that the public health care system recoups only a part of the cost of the health care provided to tourists and residents. An ageing population, as a result of the arrival of senior tourists and migrants, generates costs that local Spanish authorities find difficult to meet. This situation becomes more complex when we consider the different political and administrative levels involved. Currently, the regions are responsible for health care planning, public health, and health-care services through their own Health Service, which may lead to conflicts about the amount to be transferred.

At the same time, we have insufficient empirical evidence to help determine the extent to which these foreign residents go back to their home countries when they become ill, although some researchers have shown an interest in analysing this question

(Giner-Monfort et al., 2015). As Janine Schildt (2010), and Klaus Schriewer and Joaquín Rodes (2006) have pointed out in regard to the case of German and British leisure-oriented migrants in southern Spain, a great number of these citizens are not included in official statistics because they are reluctant to regularise their status as residents. They fear that they might no longer be eligible for social services in their home country, and that a change in their tax residence might have a negative impact on their finances. Schildt distinguishes two types of dependent leisure-oriented migrants. Obviously, we can find different cases between both types. At one extreme there is a privileged group of migrants that are reluctant to use Spanish services (because they have difficulties in communicating, or they do not trust the quality of the services), and have enough economic resources to access private health care services, or health care at home provided by competent professionals from their home country. At the other extreme, Schildt identifies a type of residents in a situation of risk, who live alone, receive a low retirement pension, have no contacts (relatives or friends) in their home country, and do not take part in social networks in Spain, all of which ends up isolating them. La Parra and Mateo (2008), and Huber and O'Reilly (2004) have warned about the gradual increase in the number of leisure-oriented migrants that experience such isolation associated with the proliferation of residents with mental health problems (anxiety/depression), and the increase in alcohol intake and tobacco use.

In this respect, one of the most obvious culture shocks happens when North European retirees realise that social assistance directed at the elderly (linked to the Spanish Welfare State) is only effective when it is complemented with informal (but significant) help from relatives. Connected to this, the creation of jobs meant to meet the specific demand for social and health care services is expected to grow in the next few years. As a matter of fact, new legal and consultancy services, especially directed at foreigners, are appearing, while young immigrants arrive and try, with no knowledge of Spanish, to set up property maintenance companies.

## Conclusion

Associating the types of residential mobility here discussed with the access to authentic experiences is not suitable: a) if the actions taken by individuals are circumscribed within the limits of the usual commercial circuits; and b) if they settle in areas where most residents come from the same socio-cultural environment as the protagonists of leisure-oriented residential mobility. Such a context may provide a more secure and comfortable environment in the short term, but it also hinders the development of attitudes favourable to the active search for genuine experiences, enriching relationships with the locals, a non-mediated knowledge of the local culture, or the discovery of less known natural areas. This requires an interaction style based on self-confidence and independence that encourages the (spatial and psychological) approach to less familiar social realities. Societies constantly change as a result of the influence of some populations on others, but those changes are not always positive for all the parties involved. Developing alternatives to the prevailing types of interaction in consumer societies requires a greater personal effort, including the willingness to take some risks, but the rewards are also greater, and we believe that in the medium and long term, the resultant effects are also more beneficial for all involved. The effort required is much greater if, as we have pointed out, most of the individuals that play a major part in these relocations are over 50 or 60 years old. This is a challenge that is not easy to face.

These residents are in some way trying to rebuild an idyllic rural community life in peculiar urban areas on the Mediterranean. Sharing the same cultural origin, a similar socio-demographic profile, and similar reasons for moving facilitates the development of a framework of shared expectations about the content, intensity, extent, and establishment of relationships in the neighbourhood, and therefore, the crystallisation of their longed-for community life. The fact that the housing estate is geographically and culturally 'isolated' within a broader context that residents find strange reinforces the tendency towards homogeneity. Under these circumstances, the common elements prevail over the differences. So, we find dual spaces at different levels (public investment, lifestyles, needs of the citizens...) that

generate disparities in the relationship between population and resources. Influenced by the erratic urban planning carried out by Spanish local authorities, a national minority whose common denominator is a shared cultural tradition starts to establish ties that become increasingly stronger as residents realise that they also share the same socio-economic and political interests.

The advanced age of a significant number of residents may be a factor deterring them from integration because the elderly find it more difficult to learn a new language, they are less willing to take risks or live with a certain level of uncertainty (compared to younger people), or their unwillingness to change certain daily habits that they have had during their whole life. Thus, their initial efforts to access a vague 'Mediterranean lifestyle' are redirected towards an attempt, maybe more pragmatic, to improve the actual conditions in which life in Spain takes place. In this respect, what Oliver (2007) describes as 'paradoxes of ageing' (tensions between the initial expectations of the retirement migrants and the restrictions imposed by the new place, the restrictions caused precisely by their advanced age, or the contradictions between their search for a cosmopolitan environment and their need to look for the support of their national community or their relatives) create different situations that contribute to reinforcing the socio-spatial separation.

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